
3.7 LAND USE

This section provides an assessment of potential land use impacts that could occur as a result of implementation of the Proposed Project and alternatives. Specifically, the section presents potential impacts of the project on existing land uses within the project area, and identifies instances of potential conflict with land use plans and policies applicable to the project area.

Information used to develop this assessment was derived through a review of land ownership information; relevant literature including adopted and draft local, state, and federal land use plans; information provided by BLM's Palm Springs/South Coast and El Centro offices; aerial photographs; USGS 7.5-minute quadrangle maps; field observations; and other environmental documentation covering the project area.

Section 3.7.1, Affected Environment, provides an overview of the current land ownership and uses within the project area with emphasis placed on areas where facilities associated with the Proposed Project and alternatives would be located. In addition, the section discusses specific federal, state, and local agency jurisdictions within the project area and identifies relevant planning documents and associated land use designations as well as zoning, standards, and other regulatory constraints that may be applicable to the project.

Section 3.7.2, Environmental Consequences, discusses potential land use impacts of the Proposed Project and alternatives.

3.7.1 Affected Environment

The Proposed Project, Alternative A, and Alternative C include various substation facilities and a transmission line to be constructed in eastern Riverside County. In the case of Alternative B, the transmission line would be constructed along a southern route, primarily in eastern and central Imperial County. Numerous federal, state, tribal, and local agencies have jurisdiction over land within these two counties. Land ownership in the project area is illustrated in Figure 3.7-1.

The following subsections define the project area setting and general land use classifications within the project area, followed by a more detailed discussion of specific land uses within areas that project facilities would be located.

3.7.1.1 Project Area Setting

From a land use perspective, the majority of the project area consists of undeveloped desert lands managed by BLM through the CDCA Plan, interspersed with tribal, state, and privately-owned lands. Prevalent land uses within the project area include rights-of-way for roads, telephone lines, pipelines, aqueducts and canals, and transmission lines; and dispersed recreation, including ORV use and wildlife observation. Other land uses within the project area include wilderness/park and wildlife refuge areas (including scenic byways and recreation land), residential and tribal land uses, commercial businesses in urban areas and at highway stops on I-10, and scattered industrial uses such as mining and landfill operations.

The BLM and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) regulate activities in the federally owned portions of the project area and along the Coachella Canal, respectively. A limited number of state owned parcels exist within the project area and are managed primarily by the CSLC or CDFG. Private lands are under the jurisdiction of the cities or counties where they are located.

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Figure 3.7-1 Land Ownership Map

Back page of figure.

Additionally, the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians and Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indian Tribes own land within or adjacent to areas where project facilities would be located.

Facilities associated with the Proposed Project, Alternative A, and Alternative C would be located entirely in eastern Riverside County. Substantial portions of Riverside County are owned and under federal jurisdiction, as shown on Figure 3.7-1. Riverside County is the fourth largest county in California in terms of land area, with a population of approximately 1.6 million people (U.S. Census Bureau 2003), mostly located in the western half of the County. The eastern half of Riverside County, including the project area, is generally rural in character, with fertile agricultural areas located in the Coachella Valley and along the Colorado River near Blythe. Urban areas in eastern Riverside County include the cities of Blythe and Indio, along with numerous resort and retirement-related developments in the western Coachella Valley in and around the communities of Palm Springs and Rancho Mirage. The Proposed Project, and Alternatives A and C transmission line corridors pass through, or are adjacent to seven of Riverside County's incorporated cities, as well as several unincorporated communities. Table 3.7-1 provides an overview of the composition of land uses in unincorporated Riverside County.

| Table 3.7-1 Unincorporated Riverside County Land Use Acreage Summary | | | | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Land Use Designation | Western County Acreage | Percentage | Eastern County Acreage | Percentage | Total | Percentage |
| Agriculture | 30,606 | 3% | 174,236 | 6% | 204,842 | 5% |
| Rural | 306,971 | 26% | 44,335 | 1.5% | 351,306 | 9% |
| Open Space | 659,036 | 56% | 2,657,115 | 91% | 3,316,151 | 81% |
| Community Development | 174,272 | 15% | 46,638 | 1.6% | 220,910 | 5% |
| Total | 1,170,885 | 100% | 2,922,324 | 100% | 4,093,209 | 100% |

Source: Riverside County 1992.

Unlike the Proposed Project and Alternatives A and C, the vast majority of the Alternative B transmission line route would be located within Imperial County. General land uses for Imperial County include intensive agriculture, open space/vacant desert land, urban areas, and rural residential areas. Imperial County is more agricultural in character than Riverside County and has a population of approximately 145,000 (U.S. Census Bureau 2003). An overview of the composition of land uses in unincorporated Imperial County is provided in Table 3.7-2, below.

| Table 3.7-2 Imperial County Land Use Designation Acreage Summary | | | |
|---|----------------------|----------------------------|--|
| Land Use Designation | Total Acreage | Percentage of Total | County Zoning Designations |
| Agricultural Component | 878,336 | 45.2% | Agricultural |
| Recreation/Preservation Component | 1,058,984 | 54.5% | Open Space-Rural |
| Urban/Rural Residential Component | 322 | 0.01% | Rural Residential |
| Industrial/Special Use Component | 5,549 | 0.29% | High Density Residential, Very Low Density Residential |
| Total | 1,943,191 | 100% | |

Source: Imperial County 1998.

The following sections describe the various land use classifications in the project area and identify relevant land use goals, policies and plans, and regulations that may be applicable to the Proposed Project and/or alternatives.

3.7.1.2 Land Use Classifications Within the Project Area

3.7.1.2.1 BLM Land Use Classifications

BLM is the predominant federal land management agency within the project area. The CDCA Plan and recent amendments define the management prescriptions and compatible land uses within the CDCA under the BLM's jurisdiction. The CDCA was established by the FLPMA of 1976, and encompasses 25 million acres of desert land in California, including 12 million acres of public land. Except for a few small parcels, all federally managed land within the project area are managed based on four multiple-use classifications (MUCs). Each MUC was developed based on the sensitivity of resources present and the types of uses expected. The four MUCs in the CDCA include Class C (Controlled Use), Class L (Limited Use), Class M (Moderate Use), and Class I (Intensive Use). Federal lands not included within one of the four MUCs is considered to be unclassified. The MUCs within the project area are shown in Figure 3.7-2 and are defined below:

Class C (Controlled Use) land is the most restricted within the CDCA. Class C land includes both formally designated wilderness areas, and areas "preliminarily recommended" as suitable for wilderness designation. For areas preliminarily recommended for wilderness designation, the Class C guidelines summarize the kind of management likely to be used if they were formally designated as wilderness by Congress. In Class C areas, new electric transmission facilities are not allowed; and new licenses or rights-of-way for these purposes would not be granted, except as provided for in the Wilderness Act 1964 or as specified by Congress.

Class L (Limited Use) areas contain sensitive natural, scenic, ecological, and cultural resource values. Public land designated as Class L is managed to provide for generally lower-intensity, carefully controlled multiple use of resources, while ensuring that sensitive values are not significantly diminished. New electric transmission facilities may be allowed only within designated utility corridors. Existing electric facilities within designated utility corridors may be maintained and upgraded or improved in accordance with existing rights-of-way or by amendments to right-of-way grants. Existing electric facilities outside of designated utility corridors may only be maintained but not upgraded or improved.

Class M (Moderate Use) areas are managed to achieve a balance between higher-intensity use and the protection of public land. This designation accommodates mining, livestock grazing, energy and utility development, and recreational uses, provided impacts generated by those activities are mitigated. New electric transmission facilities may be allowed only within designated utility corridors. Existing facilities within designated utility corridors may be maintained and upgraded or improved in accordance with existing rights-of-way or by amendments to right-of-way grants. Existing facilities outside designated utility corridors may only be maintained but not upgraded or improved.

Class I (Intensive Use) land provides for the concentrated use of land and resources to meet human needs with reasonable protection provided for sensitive natural and cultural values.

Figure 3.7-2 BLM Multiple Use Classifications (MUCs)

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Unclassified land is scattered or isolated parcels of public land within the CDCA area. These parcels are managed on a case-by-case basis (BLM 1999).

The CDCA has designated utility corridors within the planning area and provides decision criteria to assess utility siting or new corridor designation applications. Applicable decision criteria include: encouraging joint use of utility corridors for various linear projects; considering alternative corridor proposals to avoid sensitive wilderness and cultural resources whenever possible; and considering alternative power and fuel resources. The CDCA identifies 16 designated utility corridors; 3 of which (K, J and M) are located within the project area as shown on Figure ES-2. The development of utilities on BLM land outside of designated or contingent utility corridors may be considered through a plan amendment process.

The CDCA is divided into seven smaller sub-planning areas. The project area lies within two of these CDCA sub-planning areas: the Northern and Eastern Colorado Desert Planning Area and the Coachella Valley Planning Area. The following subsections provide a summary of management plans recently adopted for those two CDCA sub-planning areas. These new management plans serve as amendments to the original 1980 CDCA Plan for those specific planning areas.

3.7.1.2.1.1 The Northern and Eastern Colorado Desert Coordinated Management Plan - The NECO planning area of the CDCA spans 5.5 million acres in the southeastern California Desert, and covers the eastern and central portions of the project area. The NECO Plan, which was adopted in December 2002, provides management direction for a variety of sensitive species and habitats on BLM and National Park Service land, as well as the U.S. Marine Corps CMAGR. The NECO Plan primarily addresses recovery of the desert tortoise, conservation of a variety of other species, modifies management of wild burro herds in the planning area, and updates policies regarding ORV use and public lands access and use. As part of its focus on desert tortoise recovery and sensitive species protection, the NECO Plan has established several DWMAs, which cover much of the designated critical habitat for the desert tortoise. The NECO Plan also establishes several WHMAs, which include habitat for desert bighorn sheep and other sensitive species in the planning area (BLM 2001). WHMAs and DWMAs are discussed in more detail below.

The NECO Plan does not modify or change the previously designated utility corridors in the planning area, nor does it modify the utility-related requirements described above for MUCs in the overall CDCA. However, in a few locations, MUCs were modified by adoption of this Plan. Specifically, MUC designations will change from Moderate (M) to Limited (L) along the Proposed Project and Alternative A and C routes north of the Little Chuckwalla Hills Wilderness Area, and from Desert Center west over Chiriaco Summit to about the Cactus City Rest Area. Recent changes to MUC designations within the project area that occurred as a result of adoption of the NECO Plan are shown in Figure 3.7-2. Specific mitigation measures for transmission line installation within the area covered by the NECO Plan are associated with biological and recreational resources, and are discussed in Sections 3.1 and 3.13 of this EIS/EIR.

3.7.1.2.1.2 BLM Coachella Valley CDCA Plan Amendment - The BLM's CVPA, which was finalized in December 2002, addresses the western end of the project area within Riverside County. The CVPA was developed in coordination with the Coachella Valley Association of Governments in support of local efforts to prepare a Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat

Conservation Plan. The CVPA includes goals, objectives, and management prescriptions for comprehensive management of public land, including actions supporting recovery of ten species listed under the FESA.

Specifically, the CVPA has established the Coachella Valley ACEC to include BLM-administered land in the area formerly managed as the Coachella Valley Fringe Toed Lizard Preserve. The CVPA also expanded the Dos Palmas ACEC by approximately 5,160 acres to provide migratory and breeding habitat for several bird species and Orocopia sage (BLM 2002). In addition, the CVPA has established the Coachella Valley WHMA, to include several parcels of BLM-administered land outside of the ACECs (BLM 2002).

The CVPA does not modify or change the previously designated utility corridors in the planning area, nor does it modify MUC designations or the utility-related requirements described previously for MUCs. Specific mitigation measures for transmission line installation within the CVPA planning area are associated primarily with biological and recreational resources, and are discussed in Sections 3.1 and 3.13 of this EIS/EIR.

Given the management emphasis the BLM has placed on the designation of ACECs, DWMAs, and WHMAs in the NECO Plan and CVPA, additional information on the locations of these areas and the resources present is provided in the following sections.

3.7.1.2.1.3 Areas of Critical Environmental Concern - The BLM designates locations that have special management needs as ACEC. These areas typically feature important habitat for sensitive species, include significant cultural resources, are particularly scenic in character, or are areas hazardous to human life and property. While the designation of an ACEC itself does not necessarily change the management or use of public land, projects proposed within ACECs may be subject to unique or additional mitigation measures designed to protect the sensitive resources present. ACECs specifically within the project area are managed as either MUC Class L or Class M lands and are shown on Figure 3.7-3. Special resource values and management prescriptions within these ACECs are summarized in Table 3.7-3.

3.7.1.2.1.4 Desert Wildlife Management Areas and Wildlife Habitat Management Areas – With the recent adoption of the NECO Plan and CVPA, the BLM has designated certain portions of the project area as DWMAs and WHMAs. DWMAs have been established in areas that feature critical habitat for the desert tortoise. The only DWMAs specifically located in the project area are the Chuckwalla DWMA, which includes over 818,999 acres, and the natural portions of Joshua Tree National Park, which includes about 232,000 acres.

Several WHMAs have been designated in the project area for the management of habitat for bighorn sheep and other sensitive species. In the vicinity of the proposed project and alternative facilities, these include the Mule, Palen-Ford, Milpitas, and Coachella Valley WHMAs. The locations of DWMAs and WHMAs in the project area are shown on Figure 3.7-3; area size, applicability to project alternatives, and special resource values are summarized in Table 3.7-3.

Figure 3.7-3 ACECs

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**Table 3.7-3
Areas Of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), Desert Wildlife Management Areas (DWMAs), and Wildlife
Habitat Management Areas (WHMAs) Within The Project Area**

| Transmission Line Alternative | Area Name | County | Acres | Resource Values and Management Requirements |
|--|--|------------------------|--------------|--|
| Proposed Project, A & C | Chuckwalla Valley Dune Thicket ACEC | Riverside | 2,273 | Wildlife habitat |
| Proposed Project, A & C | Palen Dry Lake ACEC | Riverside | 3,632 | Prehistoric values |
| Proposed Project, A & C | Alligator Rock ACEC | Riverside | 7,726 | Archeological values |
| Proposed Project, A & C | Joshua Tree NP/DWMA | Riverside | 232,000 | Wildlife habitat for desert tortoise |
| Proposed Project, A & C | Palen-Ford WHMA | Riverside | | Wildlife habitat |
| All Routes | Mule Mountains ACEC | Riverside | 4,092 | Prehistoric values |
| All Routes | Mule WHMA | Riverside and Imperial | | Wildlife habitat |
| All Routes | Chuckwalla DWMA | Riverside and Imperial | 818,685 | Wildlife habitat for desert tortoise |
| All Routes | Coachella Valley ACEC. Consists of three management areas, the Coachella Valley Preserve, the Willow Hole/Edom Hill Preserves/ACECs and the Whitewater Floodplain Preserve | Riverside | 11,631 | Wildlife habitat |
| All Routes | Coachella Valley WHMA | Riverside | | Wildlife habitat |
| B | North Algodones Dunes Wilderness/ACEC | Imperial | 25,834 | Outstanding scenic area, sensitive species |
| B | Singer Geoglyphs ACEC | Imperial | 1,253 | Archeological values |
| B | Milpitas WHMA | Imperial | | Wildlife habitat |

Sources: BLM 2001, 2002.

3.7.1.2.2 Bureau of Reclamation – Coachella Canal Final Resource Management Plan

The BOR, in coordination with BLM, manages public land within the vicinity of the Coachella Canal. Most of the public and private uses allowed at various points of the Coachella Canal are for access roads and utility crossings. Under the BOR management program, the planning criteria for "access" gives priority consideration for public access where there is no access to public land. The Coachella Canal Final Resource Management Plan recommends cooperative efforts for access between federal, state, and local governments, private organizations, and individual landowners.

3.7.1.2.3 Bureau of Indian Affairs - Tribal Lands

Indian Trust Assets (ITAs) include land, natural resources, money, or other assets held by the federal government in trust or that are restricted against alienation for Indian tribes or individuals. The Department of Interior Order No. 3175 requires all its bureaus and offices to explicitly address anticipated effects on ITAs in planning, decision, and operation documents. The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) develops inventories of ITAs for all Indian tribes. According to BIA, the only ITAs in the region are the actual tribal lands belonging to the Torres-Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians, the Cabazon Band of Mission Indians, the Augustine Band of Mission Indians, and the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians.

A portion of the Proposed Project and Alternatives A and C transmission line routes cross through two parcels of tribal land owned by the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, just northeast of Cathedral City.

3.7.1.2.4 State Land

California does not have a comprehensive area-wide planning document similar to the CDCA, but state land within the project area are managed by several agencies including the California Department of Parks and Recreation (CDPR), the CDFG, and the CSLC. The CSLC manages State-owned school land along the Proposed Project and alternative transmission line routes. As legal landowner, the Commission may sell or lease state school land. Some examples of activities and surface uses of state school land include right-of-way uses (i.e., transmission lines, oil and gas pipelines, roads, and sewer lines), agricultural use, and industrial development.

3.7.1.2.5 Riverside County Land Use Classifications

Land use classifications for Riverside County were derived from the Riverside County Comprehensive General Plan (RCCGP) (Riverside County 1992) and the Draft County of Riverside General Plan (DRGP) (Riverside County 2002). The RCCGP is currently the land use planning document that is in effect, but will be replaced by the new Riverside General Plan in the near future upon adoption in 2003. Because the DRGP has not been formally adopted, only the current RCCGP land use policies are applicable to the project at the present time. Nonetheless, the DRGP contains the most current land use maps and data and these portions of the DRGP are presented for information purposes only.

The DRGP divides Riverside County into several smaller planning areas. Within the project area, the DRGP has created four distinct planning areas: Western Coachella Valley, Eastern Coachella Valley, Desert Center, and Palo Verde Valley. Portions of the project area do not fall within any

of these planning areas and are covered generally in the DRGP under Eastern Desert Non-Plan Area. A map showing the Riverside County Planning Areas within the overall project area is provided on Figure 3.7-4 (Riverside County 2002).

In terms of current land use policies related to the siting of transmission line projects in Riverside County, the Public Facilities and Services Element of the RCCGP provides various objectives and standards. In brief, these objectives and standards are intended to reduce additional transmission line-related impacts on the county through siting them along existing transmission line or utility corridors, avoidance of designated parks or wilderness areas, reducing visual impacts, and mitigation of impacts to sensitive species and raptors. Relevant portions of the Public Facilities and Services Element of the RCCGP are quoted as follows (Riverside County 1992):

- Impacts of major transmission and distribution lines will be mitigated through the use of established joint utility corridors and other appropriate measures to preserve scenic highways and other unique natural resources.
- Energy facility sites and utility corridors shall be sited to avoid adverse impact on unique natural resource areas, including but not limited to the following Federal and State designations: National and State Parks, National Monuments, historic areas, and similar sites of important State and local interest; wilderness areas, wildlife refuge areas, scenic recreational rivers, and unique or rare geological formations.
- The process of selecting sites and utility corridors shall consider compatibility with current and projected Federal, State, regional and local land use policies, plans and regulations.
- Encourage utility companies to locate access and construction roads in a manner that will preserve existing landforms and minimize erosion. Existing roads should be used whenever possible.
- Where possible, facilities should be located where they will be naturally or artificially screened and/or designed so as to be congruous with the natural features of its site. The use of non-reflective materials, painting a natural color (excluding lattice steel towers), screening with naturally planted trees may also be used to screen lines. Aesthetically designed towers should be considered for locations where they would be environmentally compatible with the surroundings.
- Areas containing populations, individuals, or habitats of rare, threatened or endangered species of flora or fauna shall be avoided, as well as areas of abundant wildlife, if construction or operation of facilities therein may cause further significant adverse impacts.
- Transmission lines and towers shall be carefully designed to minimize potential impacts such as collisions and electrocutions to large birds including raptors.
- The seismic and geologic characteristics, as well as slopes, shall be carefully considered in the design and siting of a facility and access or service roads.
- When determining the compatibility of a facility for location in a particular area, health and safety impacts must be considered.

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Figure 3.7-4 Riverside County Planning Areas

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3.7.1.2.6 Imperial County Land Use Classifications

The Imperial County General Plan (IGP), Geothermal and Transmission Element includes policies regarding transmission line siting within the County. In brief, the IGP acknowledges the need to develop energy and improve electrical transmission systems; includes land use planning guidelines for transmission corridors that have the least possible adverse impacts to the County's populous, environment, and agricultural resources; and encourages the use of existing utility corridors, rights-of-way, and design features that minimize the impacts of transmission lines to the extent practicable.

The Imperial County Zoning Ordinance also regulates land use in the county and provides guidance related to transmission line project design and installation. Within Imperial County, most of the Alternative B transmission line route is within the S-2 (Open Space/Recreation) zone, and a small portion of the route is within the A-3 (Agriculture) zone near the community of Palo Verde.

The primary intent of the S-2 zoning designation is to preserve and protect open space areas and important cultural and biological resources. Areas within the S-2 zone are characterized by undeveloped desert features (IGP Update 1998, Imperial Zoning Ordinance §90519). The S-2 zoning designation allows for non-residential structures, including transmission line and communication towers up to 100 feet with a conditional use permit. A zoning variance is required from Imperial County where taller structures are proposed.

The A-3 zoning designation identifies areas that are suitable for agriculture, including all agricultural crop production and animal keeping. An agricultural zoning designation is intended to preserve land for agricultural production and related industries. Where this designation is applied, agriculture shall be promoted as the principal and dominant use to which all other uses shall be subordinate. Permitted uses in the A-3 zone include, "transmission lines, including supporting towers, poles, microwave towers, [and] utility substations" (Imperial Zoning Ordinance §90509.1). A height limit of 120 feet applies to all non-residential structures in this zone, including transmission line support structures. A zoning variance is required from Imperial County where taller structures are proposed. In addition, where potential conflicts could arise with aviation, such as airport operations or crop dusting, transmission line projects are also reviewed by the Imperial County Airport Land Use Commission.

3.7.1.2.7 Important Farmland

Both Riverside and Imperial counties recognize the California State Department of Conservation's Important Farmland Mapping Program land categories. Various farmland classifications and adjacent Urban Build Up land in the project area are shown in Figure 3.7-5 and are defined below:

Prime Farmland – This farmland classification is used to describe the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for the production of crops. When properly managed according to current farming methods, prime farmland contains the optimal soil quality and moisture supply to produce sustained crop yields. At some time during the mapping update cycles, prime farmlands must produce crops.

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Figure 3.7-5 Important Farmland

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Farmland of Statewide Importance – This farmland classification is similar to Prime Farmland but with minor shortcomings, such as greater slope or high evapotranspiration rates.

Unique Farmland – This farmland classification is used to describe land with lesser quality soils that is capable of producing specific high economic value crops. These crops are listed by the California Department of Food and Agriculture and include such crops as oranges, olives, avocados, rice, and flowers.

Farmland of Local Importance – This farmland classification is used to describe land important to the local agricultural economy as determined by each county's board of supervisors and local advisory committees.

Urban Built-Up Land – Urban and Built-Up Land is used for residential, industrial, commercial, construction, institutional, public administrative purposes, railroad yards, cemeteries, airports, golf courses, sanitary landfills, sewage treatment plants, water control structures, and other development purposes. Highways, railroads, and other transportation facilities are included as Urban and Built-Up Land if they are part of the surrounding urban area.

Since agricultural production in the project area contributes substantially to the local and regional economy, important farmland is considered to be valuable, non-renewable resources that can be permanently lost if converted to non-agricultural uses.

3.7.1.2.8 Land Use Planning Documents

Listed below are the various land use planning documents used for this analysis. As described previously, the use of federally-administered public land lies primarily within the jurisdiction of the BLM, and to a lesser extent, the BOR along the Coachella Canal. State-owned school land in the project area is administered by the CSLC. Any tribal land that could be impacted would be under the jurisdiction of the respective Native American Tribe. Finally, the use of privately-owned land in the project area is regulated by Riverside and Imperial Counties and is within the jurisdiction or spheres of influence of seven incorporated cities. Land use planning documents utilized for this EIS/EIR included:

- BLM CDCA Plan, 1990 (1999 Update) BLM NECO Plan (amending the CDCA and Sikes Act Plan with the CDFG), 2001;
- BLM Draft CVPA, 2002;
- BOR Coachella Canal Final Resource Management Plan, 1999;
- RCCGP, 1992;
- Riverside and Imperial County Airport Comprehensive Land Use Plans (Blythe, Desert Center, Chiraco Summit, and Bermuda Dunes Airports);
- City of Blythe General Plan, 1989;
- Cathedral City General Plan, 1983 (2001-2002 update);
- City of Coachella General Plan, 2020 (1996); and
- IGP, 1998.

Relevant portions of each of these land use plans and potential project inconsistencies with these plans are discussed in Section 3.7.2, Environmental Consequences.

3.7.1.3 Current Land Uses Adjacent to the Proposed Project, Alternative A, and Alternative C Facilities

The Proposed Project, and Alternatives A and C are located entirely within BLM's Designated Utility Corridor K (Figure ES-2) and generally parallel I-10 and the existing SCE Devers-Palo Verde 500-kV Transmission Line. Numerous existing utility and other types of linear projects are present in the project area, including transmission lines, gas pipelines, telephone and communication lines, buried water pipelines, and the Colorado River Aqueduct and Coachella Canal. As described in Section 2.2.2, the total length of the Proposed Project route is 118 miles. The project would generally require a right-of-way width of 300 feet (with some variation) that would occupy approximately 4,290 acres.

As discussed previously, the Proposed Project and Alternatives A and C would be located entirely within Riverside County. The Proposed Project transmission route traverses three existing Riverside County Planning Areas including the Palo Verde Valley Area, and both the Eastern and Western Coachella Valley Planning Areas. Other local jurisdictions within this area include the City of Blythe, City of Coachella, and Cathedral City.

Designated Utility Corridor K includes numerous existing utility projects that cross or are routed adjacent to the Proposed Project and Alternative A and C transmission line routes. Since the potential exists for conflicts between the project and other utility lines in the project area, the project design will have to take into account the presence of these other utilities and either avoid them or mitigate impacts to assure compatibility. Existing utility projects with rights-of-way and/or land encumbrances identified by the BLM in the various parts of the project area are described in Appendix I.

As described in Chapter 2, Alternative A is the same as the Proposed Project, but utilizes a different transmission line route in the central portion of the project area, known as Option A-2. In total, the length of Alternative A would be 119 miles, and would require a right-of-way of 300 feet (with some variation) that would occupy approximately 4,325 acres.

Alternative C follows a similar route as the Proposed Project, but is more or less adjacent to I-10 instead of adjacent to the existing Palo Verde-Devers Transmission Line. The length of this alternative would be 117 miles, and would require a right-of-way of 300 feet (with some variation) that would occupy approximately 4,250 acres.

Existing land uses along the Proposed Project and Alternative A and C transmission line routes are described below.

3.7.1.3.1 New Substation/Switching Station Locations

3.7.1.3.1.1 New Substation/Switching Station on Hobsonway - Agriculture is the predominant land use in the area surrounding the new substation/switching station, which is located on the north side of Hobsonway, approximately 4.5 miles west of Blythe, California. Orchards (primarily lemons) and various field crops are the primary agricultural use on the mesa

in the vicinity. Field crops on the lower Palo Verde Valley include alfalfa, wheat, cotton, cantaloupe, watermelon, lettuce and hay, among others. This area lies within the Riverside County Palo Verde Planning Area.

Land uses in the vicinity of the new substation/switching station location are primarily designated airport, vacant and agricultural land. Within the upper mesa area and to the west of the site are fallowed agricultural fields. Agriculture is the predominant land use in the Palo Verde Valley, with about 104,000 acres of land in agricultural production within the Palo Verde Valley and additional acreage (historically up to 16,000 acres) on the adjacent mesa. The Proposed Project is located on the mesa above the Palo Verde Valley floor, where citrus orchards are dominant. Directly east and south of the site, the Sunworld Corporation cultivates about 481 acres of lemons. This orchard is “old growth” and the trees are beginning to reach the end of their productive life.

The proposed substation/switching station site is designated for Heavy Industrial (I-H) use in the City of Blythe General Plan, and is zoned General Industrial (I-G) in the City of Blythe Zoning Code. “Utility operations facilities,” such as the Blythe Power Plant and the Proposed Project, are allowed unconditionally in this zone. The nearest residential area to the new substation/switching station is an unincorporated area called Mesa Verde located approximately 2 miles southwest of the site. The City of Blythe and the community of Ripley are located in the Palo Verde Valley, about 5 miles east and 6 miles southeast, respectively. Isolated farm and rural residential uses are located approximately 0.75 miles southwest of the site.

The surrounding areas include the Blythe Airport (approximately 1-mile to the west and zoned for industrial use), a small sewage treatment facility (0.25 miles to the west), the I-10 corridor (approximately 0.25 miles to the south), fallowed agricultural fields to the north and west, and a citrus orchard bordering the eastern edge of the site.

The Blythe Airport is located approximately 5 miles west of the City of Blythe and about 1 mile east of the new substation/switching station. The airport primarily serves general aviation (corporate, business, and personal) traffic demand in the Blythe area, and is the largest airport serving eastern Riverside County. The airport is classified in the National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems as a general aviation transport airport, with two runways designed to accommodate business jets and transport aircraft.

The Blythe Power Plant lies about 2,000 feet directly east of the new substation/switching station site. A small industrial area is located north of the site. Other land uses near the site and north of Hobsonway are the U.S. Border Patrol (over 1 mile to the west), the Blythe Trap Shooting Club, and the Riverside County Animal Shelter, both about 1 mile to the west.

3.7.1.3.1.2 New Substation/Switching Station on Dillon Road – The proposed new substation/switching station on Dillon Road is on a parcel of privately-owned land north of the City of Indio and the Coachella Canal. The site is in a vacant desert area. To the east and northwest of the site are parcels of federally-administered land managed by the BOR.

3.7.1.3.2 Land Uses from the New Substation/Switching Station to Desert Center

From the new substation/switching station, the Proposed Project transmission line route follows the existing Devers-Palo Verde Transmission Line west across the Palo Verde Mesa and then open desert to the community of Desert Center within the BLM's Designated Utility Corridor K. Several clustered mountain ranges, dry lakebeds, and relatively flat desert lowlands characterize the natural features in the area.

Land uses along this segment are mostly undeveloped desert land characterized by rural open space and are classified by BLM as MUC Moderate and Limited use areas. As shown in Figure 3.7-5, the Proposed Project transmission route travels through two small parcels of prime farmland or farmlands of local importance, on its eastern end near the City of Blythe. Infrequent residential uses, including Mesa Verde (near Blythe) and the small tourist-serving commercial area of Desert Center (at the intersection of I-10 with SR-177) are located within this area. The Proposed Project transmission line route would cross the Mule WHMA, the Chuckwalla Valley Dune Thicket ACEC, the Chuckwalla DWMA, and the Palen-Ford WHMA in this portion of the project area.

The California Department of Corrections operates the Ironwood and Chuckwalla Valley State Prisons west of Blythe on Wiley's Well Road, about 2 miles south of the Proposed Project transmission line route. The Proposed Project would not encroach upon or otherwise affect operation of these facilities.

The community of Desert Center, located along I-10 in the Chuckwalla Valley, includes a small residential community, small lake, airstrip, and commercial area on the north side of I-10. A gas station, several food establishments, and limited agricultural uses characterize this community. The Proposed Project Transmission Line route would be located on the south side of the highway near Desert Center. The Proposed Project transmission line route would pass the Desert Center airstrip roughly 3 miles to the south and is not within its policy/exclusion area (Riverside County 1992).

Just south of Desert Center and I-10 are the Chuckwalla Mountains Wilderness Area and Alligator Rock ACEC. The Proposed Project transmission line route would pass just north of these areas along the south side of the highway.

The Alternative C transmission line would also originate west of the City of Blythe at the new substation/switching station. The alternative would proceed southwest along existing transmission line rights-of-way for approximately 1 mile then cross back over I-10 to the north. Continuing to parallel the north side of I-10, Alternative C would proceed west avoiding the Chuckwalla Valley Dune Thicket ACEC and Mule WHMA (Figure 3.7-3).

Existing utility and/or linear projects identified by the BLM in this part of the project area are summarized below. A complete list of existing projects holding BLM rights-of-way or other land encumbrances is provided in Appendix I.

- Transmission lines of various voltages owned by SCE and IID;
- Gas pipelines owned by Southern California Gas Company and Kaiser Steel;

- A water plant and pipeline owned by Southern California Gas Company;
- A water pipeline operated by the Riverside County Transportation Department;
- Various telephone/communication lines operated by Pacific Bell, Sprint, AT&T, and Verizon;
- Communication sites and towers owned by the FAA, the California Department of Transportation, Southern California Gas, and Verizon Wireless; and
- Access roads owned by the California Department of Corrections, Kaiser Eagle Mountain, Inc., Cocopah Nurseries, Demetrulias Spiros, and Holcomb & Mort Trust Co;
- Interstate 10 managed by the Caltrans; and
- Mining operations owned by Edward Barber.

3.7.1.3.3 Land Uses from Desert Center to the Eastern Coachella Valley Planning Area Boundary (Near Chiriaco Summit)

From Desert Center west to the Coachella Valley, the project area is virtually uninhabited. The RCCGP classifies this region almost exclusively as rural desert land with the exception of Desert Center. No important farmlands are located along this segment.

Designated recreational areas within the project vicinity include Joshua Tree National Park, and the Orocopia Mountains and the Mecca Hills Wilderness Areas. The Proposed Project transmission line route and Alternatives A and C would pass just north of these wilderness areas. The Proposed Project and alternative transmission line routes would remain to the south of I-10 in this area, 2 to 3 miles south of Joshua Tree National Park.

Chiriaco Summit is a community of about 70 residents located approximately 30 miles east of Indio. The summit is the location of the General George S. Patton Memorial Museum and a small airport (Riverside County 2002). The museum and Chiraco Summit Airport are on the north side of I-10 at the summit, while the transmission line routes would be on the south side of the Interstate. The Proposed Project is not located within the airport influenced policy area (Riverside County 1992). The historic Camp Young desert training center utilized by General Patton is located to the south of I-10, west of Chiriaco Summit. No established recreation facilities are present at the Camp Young site. The Proposed Project and Alternative C transmission line routes would generally avoid this site by passing to the north, while the Alternative A Option A-2 route would cross the middle of the Camp Young site immediately adjacent to the existing SCE transmission line.

The Metropolitan Water District's (MWD) Colorado River Aqueduct enters the Chuckwalla Valley from the north around the edge of Joshua Tree National Park. A pumping station and proposed storage project associated with the aqueduct are located near Hayfield Dry Lake. The aqueduct then parallels I-10 and the Proposed Project transmission line route to the west, just south of the national park boundary.

Existing utility and/or linear projects identified by the BLM in this part of the project area are summarized below. A complete list of existing projects holding BLM rights-of-way or other land encumbrances is provided in Appendix I:

- Transmission lines of various voltages owned by SCE and IID;
- Gas pipelines owned by Southern California Gas Company and Kaiser Steel;
- A water plant and pipeline owned by Southern California Gas Company;
- A water pipeline owned by Joseph Chiriaco, Inc.;
- Various telephone/communication lines operated by Pacific Bell, Sprint, Verizon, SCE, and AT&T;
- Communication sites owned by the Caltrans and Southern California Gas;
- Interstate 10 managed by the Caltrans;
- Access roads owned by Kaiser Eagle Mountain, Inc. (2 roads), La Sierra University, and Holcomb & Mort Trust Co; and
- A FERC land withdrawal.

3.7.1.3.4 Land Uses in the Eastern Coachella Valley Planning Area

The Eastern Coachella Valley Planning Area is within the southeast portion of the Coachella Valley, south and east of the City of Indio. The Planning Area extends east to Chiriaco Summit along I-10, as shown in Figure 3.7-6. Generally undeveloped desert land, small areas of agriculture, and infrequent residential uses are found along this portion of the Proposed Project transmission line route. Land uses within the Eastern Coachella Valley Planning Area are depicted in Figure 3.7-6.

Continuing west, the Proposed Project and Alternatives A and C transmission line routes would converge and follow the same alignment, crossing to the north side of I-10 near the Cactus City Rest Area. The area near the Cactus City Rest Stop includes numerous existing utility projects north and south of I-10, including other electric transmission lines, fiber optic communication lines, three gas pipelines, and the Colorado River Aqueduct. From there, the transmission line routes remain to the north of I-10 in undeveloped desert land until entering the Coachella Valley, east of Indio. In this area, the transmission line corridor would pass adjacent to the southwestern corner of Joshua Tree National Park, but would not encroach upon park land.

In the eastern Coachella Valley, the Augustine Band of Mission Indians, the Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians, the 29 Palms Band of Mission Indians, and the Cabazon Band of Mission Indians own tribal land (10,046 acres total) throughout the area (Riverside County 2002). Mostly low intensity agricultural land uses, but also commercial businesses, a power generation plant, and a tire recycling facility occur on tribal land in this portion of the project area (Riverside County 2002).

Figure 3.7-6 Eastern Coachella Valley Land Use

Back page of figure.

Existing utility and/or linear projects identified by the BLM in this part of the project area are summarized below. A complete list of existing projects holding BLM rights-of-way or other land encumbrances is provided in Appendix I.

- Transmission lines of various voltages owned by SCE and IID;
- Gas pipelines owned by Southern California Gas Company;
- A water pipeline owned by Joseph Chiriaco, Inc.;
- Various telephone/communication lines operated by Pacific Bell, Sprint, and AT&T;
- A sanitary landfill operated by Riverside County;
- A water detention dike operated by the BOR;
- A flood control ditch owned by Southern California Gas Company;
- Interstate 10 and other state highways managed by the Caltrans;
- An access road serving Joshua Tree National Park; and
- A FERC land withdrawal.

3.7.1.3.5 Land Uses in the Western Coachella Valley Planning Area to the Devers Substation

The Western Coachella Valley Plan encompasses the project area from the Eastern Coachella Valley Planning Area boundary east of Indio, to the Devers Substation, as shown in Figure 3.7-5. The Western Coachella Valley portion of the project area includes the cities of Desert Hot Springs, Palm Desert, Cathedral City, Palm Springs, La Quinta, Indio, Rancho Mirage and Indian Wells, which are mostly located to the south of I-10. Unincorporated communities within or adjacent to the Proposed Project include Bermuda Dunes, Thousand Palms, Sun City, Palm Desert and North Palm Springs. Land uses within the Western Coachella Valley Planning Area are depicted in Figure 3.7-7.

The majority of urban development in the Coachella Valley is within these communities, with the exception of rural enclaves scattered throughout the valley. Urban land uses found in the unincorporated portions of the Western Coachella Valley include rural and suburban residential, commercial, industrial, mining, wind energy and recreational uses.

The Alternative B Upgrade Section 1 alignment would cross the Coachella Canal and land administered by the BOR just prior to joining the Proposed Project and Alternatives A and C transmission line routes at the proposed new substation on Dillon Road, just north of the City of Coachella. The new substation would be constructed on vacant privately owned land in unincorporated Riverside County.

In the Western Coachella Valley, from the proposed new substation to the Devers Substation, the Proposed Project and alternative transmission line routes are located to the north of the Interstate in relatively undeveloped rural desert areas. Most of the land crossed in the Western Coachella Valley is privately owned, with scattered federal parcels in the foothills of the Little San

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Figure 3.7-7 Western Coachella Valley Land Use

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Bernardino Mountains and in the Indio Hills. Land uses along the Proposed Project and alternative transmission line routes in this area include mostly open space with scattered residential uses located outside the existing utility right-of-way. To the northwest of the new Dillon Road substation/switching station, the Proposed Project and alternative transmission line routes would cross land administered by the BOR near the Coachella Canal.

The Proposed Project and alternative transmission line routes would avoid a sand and gravel mining operation to the northwest of Indio by passing around its north side. The Alternative B Upgrade route would remain in its current existing location on the south side of the mining operation. The Alternative B transmission line route and alternatives then cross Cathedral City's planning jurisdiction. The Proposed Project's consistency with the Cathedral City General Plan is discussed in Table 3.7-4.

Just northwest of the community of Thousand Palms, the transmission line routes cross two parcels of undeveloped tribal land owned by the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians. Use of these tribal lands will require the negotiation of a right-of-way agreement and encroachment permit with the tribe.

Other important open space or wildlife habitat areas in this portion of the project area that would be crossed by the Proposed Project and alternative transmission line routes include the Coachella Valley ACEC and Coachella Valley WHMA, both on BLM-administered land. The Proposed Project and alternative transmission line routes also traverse small parcels of Prime Farmlands and Farmland of Statewide Importance through this area, as shown in Figure 3.7-5.

The project would terminate at the Devers Substation. The project would require modification of the existing substation, requiring the use of an additional five acres of vacant privately owned land.

Existing utility and/or linear projects identified by the BLM in this part of the project area are summarized below. A complete list of existing projects holding BLM rights-of-way or other land encumbrances is provided in Appendix I.

- Transmission lines of various voltages owned by SCE and IID;
- Wind energy projects and associated transmission lines operated by Sunbelt Developers, Wind Tech Limited, Difwind Farms Limited;
- Gas pipelines owned by Southern California Gas Company;
- Various telephone/communication lines operated by Pacific Bell, Sprint, and AT&T;
- A communication tower operated by Pinnacle Towers, Inc.;
- A sanitary landfill operated by Riverside County;
- An irrigation canal (Coachella Canal) and water detention dike operated by the BOR;
- Various BOR land withdrawals;
- A water treatment plant and stormwater channel operated by the Coachella Valley Water District;
- An aggregate mining operation;

- Lands utilized by the Cities of Indio and Desert Hot Springs for recreation and other purposes;
- Interstate 10 and other state highways managed by the Caltrans;
- A county road owned by Riverside County;
- Various access roads serving municipal and private interests;
- Various small tract classifications set aside by BLM; and
- A FERC land withdrawal.

3.7.1.4 Current Land Uses Adjacent to Alternative B Facilities

The Alternative B transmission line would include 79 miles of new 230-kV transmission line from the proposed new substation/switching station near Blythe to the Midway Substation, plus 35 miles of upgrade to an existing transmission line from the Coachella Substation to the Devers Substation. Alternative B would originate at the same location as the Proposed Project (the proposed new substation/switching station) in Riverside County's Palo Verde Planning Area, but would then proceed to the southwest into Imperial County. The land traversed by this transmission line route is under federal, state, and private ownership (see Figure 3.7-1). Except for a few residential areas located in Palo Verde, Glamis and Niland, the primary land uses along the Alternative B transmission line route include open space and agriculture.

The following sections describe land uses for Alternative B in greater detail.

3.7.1.4.1 New Substation/Switching Station to Milpitas Wash Road

As shown in Figure 3.7-1, the first segment of the Alternative B transmission line originates just west of the City of Blythe at the new substation/switching station. Within Riverside County, Alternative B proceeds southwesterly across land designated as farmland of local importance (Figure 3.7-5). The route then crosses into Imperial County and proceeds through mostly undeveloped desert land paralleling Western's existing 161-kV transmission line. While paralleling this existing transmission line, Alternative B crosses the Bradshaw Trail, a BLM-designated National Back Country Byway, then continues southwest paralleling SR-78. Throughout this portion of the project area, Alternative B would be located in BLM Designated Utility Corridor J (Figure ES-2).

While paralleling the existing 161-kV transmission line, the Alternative B alignment passes the Mule Mountains ACEC about 1 mile to the east and crosses a portion of the Mule WHMA and the Chuckwalla DWMA (see Figure 3.7-3). This segment then passes between two parts of the Palo Verde Mountains Wilderness Area.

Alternative B has one segment alignment option, Option B-1, which would shift the transmission line alignment eastward for a distance of approximately 14 miles, increasing the total length of the transmission line by approximately 4 miles. BLM land in this portion of the project area is actually outside of the CDCA planning area. Option B-1 was originally conceived to follow the approved right-of-way for the NBP project. The right-of-way for Option B-1 would be located outside of BLM Designated Utility Corridor J. The route is adjacent to, but does not cross the Cibola National Wildlife Refuge (NWR).

**Table 3.7-4
Summary of Consistency with Land Use Plans^a**

| Plan Element or Topic | Proposed Project | Alternative A | Alternative B | Alternative C |
|--|---|-------------------------------|--|--|
| BLM California Desert Conservation Area Plan and Designated Utility Corridors | | | | |
| <i>Utilities and Land Use Classifications:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Controlled Use</i> – new transmission facilities not allowed unless specified in wilderness legislation or by Congress. • <i>Limited Use</i> – Transmission facilities allowed within designated utility corridors. • <i>Moderate Use</i> – Transmission facilities allowed within designated utility corridors. | <p>The proposed transmission line route is located entirely within BLM Designated Utility Corridor K.</p> <p>All construction in Limited and Moderate Use areas would comply with any applicable land use restrictions and mitigation measures necessary for the resource(s) protected therein.</p> | Same as Proposed Project. | The Alternative B transmission line would not be located entirely within a BLM-designated utility corridor. Alternative B would require a CDCA Plan amendment to allow construction of the transmission line outside of designated utility corridors within the CDCA. | Same as Proposed Project. |
| BLM Northern and Eastern Colorado Desert Coordinated Management Plan (NECO Plan) | | | | |
| <i>The recently adopted NECO Plan will amend the CDCA to include:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chuckwalla DWMA - 818,865 acres • Re-designate all Multiple-use Class M land in proposed DWMAs as Multiple Use Class L. | As these Management Plans are finalized any additional compliance requirements would be met. Sections 3.1 Biological Resources and Section 3.13 Wilderness and Recreation also discuss various compliance requirements under these Plans. | Same as Proposed Project. | Same as Proposed Project. | Same as Proposed Project. |
| BLM Coachella Valley Plan Amendment (CVPA) | | | | |
| <i>The recently adopted CVPA will amend the CDCA to include:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designate Coachella Valley ACEC. • Expand Dos Palmas ACEC. | Where the proposed transmission line route crosses the Coachella Valley ACEC, additional mitigation measures related to wildlife and habitat protection would be implemented as required. | Same as the Proposed Project. | Same as Proposed Project for Coachella Valley ACEC; Alternative B would not impact the Dos Palmas ACEC. | Same as the Proposed Project. |
| BLM NECO Plan and CVPA | | | | |
| <i>ACEC, DWMAs, WHMAs:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas within the CDCA where special management attention is required for important wildlife, cultural, or other resources. • While transmission line projects are not prohibited in these areas, additional mitigation measures may be required to protect the sensitive resources present. | Areas crossed by the Proposed Project transmission line route include: Chuckwalla Valley Dune Thicket and Coachella Valley ACECs, Chuckwalla DWMA, Mule WHMA, Palen-Ford WHMA, and Coachella Valley WHMA. Additional mitigation measures required by BLM to protect the sensitive resources present would be implemented. | Same as Proposed Project. | Areas crossed by the Alternative B transmission line route include: Chuckwalla DWMA, Mule WHMA, Coachella Valley ACEC, and Coachella Valley WHMA. This alignment also crosses a narrow gap between two portions of the Palo Verde Wilderness Area. | Alternative C would avoid the Chuckwalla Valley Dune Thicket ACEC and Mule WHMA, but would cross the Chuckwalla DWMA, Palen-Ford WHMA, Coachella |

**Table 3.7-4
Summary of Consistency with Land Use Plans^a**

| Plan Element or Topic | Proposed Project | Alternative A | Alternative B | Alternative C |
|---|--|-------------------------------|---|--|
| | | | Option B-1 would cross a portion of the Milpitas WHMA. Additional mitigation measures required by BLM to protect the sensitive resources present would be implemented. | Valley ACEC, and Coachella Valley WHMA. Additional mitigation measures required by BLM to protect the sensitive resources present in ACECs would be implemented. |
| Bureau of Reclamation Coachella Canal Final Resource Management Plan | | | | |
| Priority of public access should be given where no access exists to public land. | The Proposed Project would not restrict or preclude access to BOR public lands. | Same as the Proposed Project. | Same as the Proposed Project. | Same as the Proposed Project. |
| Bureau of Indian Affairs - Tribal Land | | | | |
| Assessment of project consistency with tribal land management objectives is best determined by consulting with appropriate Indian tribes or individuals. | The Proposed Project would cross lands owned by the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians. Since transmission lines already exist along the proposed route and a right of way agreement will be negotiated with the tribe, the Proposed Project would be consistent with tribal land management objectives and would have no adverse impacts on ITAs. | Same as the Proposed Project. | Same as the Proposed Project. | Same as the Proposed Project. |
| California State Lands Commission | | | | |
| The CSLC may sell or lease state school lands for uses including rights-of-way for electric transmission lines, oil and gas pipelines, roads, sewer lines and similar facilities. | The Proposed Project would either obtain leases or purchase areas owned by the CSLC as necessary. | Same as Proposed Project. | Same as Proposed Project. | Same as Proposed Project. |

**Table 3.7-4
Summary of Consistency with Land Use Plans^a**

| Plan Element or Topic | Proposed Project | Alternative A | Alternative B | Alternative C |
|--|---|----------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| Riverside County Comprehensive General Plan (RCCGP), 1992 | | | | |
| Utilities Element: Impacts of major transmission lines will be mitigated through the use of established utility corridors, avoidance of established parks and recreation areas, reduced visual impacts, and impacts to raptors or other sensitive species. | The Proposed Project would be consistent with the Riverside County General Plan Utilities Element. | Same as Proposed Project. | Same as Proposed Project. | Same as Proposed Project. |
| Riverside and Imperial County Airport Comprehensive Land Use Plans | | | | |
| County Airport Land Use Commissions, in conjunction with the FAA establish interference zones around airstrips and airports to ensure adequate safety clearance zones. | Transmission line development could potentially be incompatible with the Blythe Airport CLUP. See Impact A1 for additional discussion. | Same as Proposed Project. | Transmission line development could potentially be incompatible with the Blythe Airport CLUP. See Land Use Impact 1 for additional discussion. Support structure height restrictions on land crossed by Alternative B. May require a consistency review by the Imperial ALUC. | Same as Proposed Project. |
| City of Blythe General Plan | | | | |
| Policy guidance document addressing land use, circulation, community facilities, and development vision for the City of Blythe. | New substation/switching station site is designated for Heavy Industrial (I-H) use in the City of Blythe General Plan, and is zoned General Industrial (I-G) in the City of Blythe Zoning Code. Utility operations facilities are permitted in this zone. Therefore, the addition of Proposed Project is consistent with the current land use designation and zoning. | Same as Proposed Project. | Same as Proposed Project. | Same as Proposed Project. |
| Cathedral City General Plan, 1998 (Draft Update 2001-2002) | | | | |
| Policies to foster coordination and approval of utility planning and design. Utility lines shall be undergrounded, to the greatest extent practical. | Project transmission line may be located within Cathedral City. Project transmission lines cannot be feasibly undergrounded, however, they would be located adjacent to the existing Devers-Palo Verde Transmission Line and within a major utility corridor. | Same as Proposed Project. | Same as Proposed Project. | Same as Proposed Project. |

**Table 3.7-4
Summary of Consistency with Land Use Plans^a**

| Plan Element or Topic | Proposed Project | Alternative A | Alternative B | Alternative C |
|---|---|---------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| City of Coachella General Plan (1996) | | | | |
| Shared use of major transmission corridors and other appropriate measures shall be encouraged to preserve aesthetic resources and lessen visual impacts. | Transmission line construction and upgrades would be conducted within existing utility corridors. | Same as Proposed Project. | Same as Proposed Project. | Same as Proposed Project. |
| Imperial County General Plan | | | | |
| <i>Geothermal and Transmission Policies:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes land use planning guidelines for transmission corridors that have the least possible adverse impacts to the County's populous, environmental and agricultural resources. Encourage the use of existing corridors, rights-of-way, and design features that minimize the impacts of transmission lines to the extent practicable. | Not applicable. | Not applicable. | The Alternative B transmission line would not be located entirely within a designated utility corridor and thus inconsistent with the Geothermal and Transmission Element of the IGP and may require a General Plan amendment. | Not applicable. |
| <i>Imperial County Zoning Ordinance</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limits the heights of non-residential structures. Large portions of Alternative B are zoned "S-2" (Open Space/Recreation) with a 100' structure height limitation. Additional areas along the Alternative B transmission line route are zoned "A-3" (Agricultural) with a 120' structure height limitation. | Not applicable. | Not applicable. | Transmission line structures would exceed applicable height limitations and would likely require a zoning variance and a review by the Imperial County ALUC. | Not applicable. |

^a. Bold text indicates potential land use or land use plan element inconsistency.

Existing utility and/or linear projects identified by the BLM in this part of the project area are summarized below. A complete list of existing projects holding BLM rights-of-way or other land encumbrances is provided in Appendix I.

- Transmission lines of various voltages owned by SCE and IID;
- Gas pipelines owned by Southern California Gas Company;
- A water pipeline operated by Riverside County;
- Various telephone/communication lines operated by Pacific Bell, Sprint, AT&T, and Verizon;
- Interstate 10, managed by the Caltrans; and
- A BLM land withdrawal.

3.7.1.4.2 Land Uses from Milpitas Wash Road to Glamis, California

The Alternative B transmission line continues adjacent to SR-78 passing between the southern corner of the CMAGR and the Indian Pass Wilderness. Traveling southward, the transmission line continues past the Mesquite Mine and Overlook Trail. In this vicinity, the Alternative B and Option B-1 routes cross portions of the Chuckwalla DWMA and the Milpitas WHMA. Near SR-34, Alternative B would diverge from BLM Designated Utility Corridor J. The route then continues south, avoiding the Singer Geoglyphs ACEC by remaining on the west side of SR-78, and continues in a southerly direction until intercepting the right-of-way near Glamis, California.

Existing utility and/or linear projects identified by the BLM in this part of the project area are summarized below. A complete list of existing projects holding BLM rights-of-way or other land encumbrances is provided in Appendix I.

- Transmission lines of various voltages owned by SCE and IID;
- Gas pipelines owned by Southern California Gas Company;
- Various telephone/communication lines operated by Pacific Bell, Sprint, AT&T, and Verizon;
- SR-78, managed by the Caltrans;
- County roads maintained by Imperial County; and
- A BLM land withdrawal.

3.7.1.4.3 Land Uses from Glamis, California to the Midway Substation

Turning northwesterly, Alternative B parallels the UPRR tracks, adjacent to the North Algodones Dunes Wilderness Area and ACEC and then the Mammoth Wash Unit of the Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area. The Alternative B transmission line route also parallels, but remains outside of, the southwest boundary of CMAGR for a distance of about 15 miles. Alternative B then continues northwesterly past the community of Iris and on to the Midway Substation near Niland. For this portion of the project area, Alternative B would not utilize a designated utility corridor. Throughout this area, land uses consist almost entirely of open space areas used for dispersed recreation to the west and military purposes in the CMAGR to the east.

Existing utility and/or linear projects identified by the BLM in this part of the project area are summarized below. A complete list of existing projects holding BLM rights-of-way or other land encumbrances is provided in Appendix I.

- Transmission lines of various voltages owned by IID and Santa Fe Mining Company;
- Gas pipelines owned by Southern California Gas Company and SFPP;
- Various telephone/communication lines operated by Pacific Bell, SFPP LP, and AT&T;
- An irrigation project (Coachella Canal) owned by the IID;
- A communication site owned by the U.S. Marine Corps;
- A railroad right-of-way;
- Mining operations owned by Santa Fe Pacific Gold, Gold Field Mining, and Andrew Miller;
- A geothermal energy project site;
- County roads maintained by Imperial County; and
- A BLM land withdrawal.

3.7.1.4.4 Land Uses from Coachella Substation to Devers Substation Upgrade

In addition to a new 79-mile 230-kV transmission line between the new substation/switching station and the Midway Substation, Alternative B would also require upgrading approximately 25 miles of an existing transmission line between the Coachella and Mirage Substations (Upgrade Segment 1), and approximately 15 miles between the Mirage and Devers Substations (Upgrade Segment 2).

Upgrade Segment 1 is located within the City of Coachella's planning jurisdiction. Nearby land uses are comprised of undeveloped desert land, the Coachella Valley ACEC (formerly referred to as the Coachella Valley Fringe-Toed Lizard Preserve), and small areas of agriculture and scattered rural residential uses. Land uses in this portion of the project area are mapped on Figure 3.7-7. Upgrade Segment 1 would be located within BLM Designated Utility Corridor M.

Since Upgrade Segment 2 follows the same route as the Proposed Project and Alternatives A and C, land uses along Upgrade Segment 2 are the same as discussed previously for the Proposed Project transmission route. Accordingly, Upgrade Segment 2 would lie within BLM Designated Utility Corridor K (Figure ES-2).

3.7.1.5 Future Land Use Trends

County and City land use policies in the project area generally emphasize the use of existing utility corridors for transmission projects. These established utility corridors tend to be buffered by agricultural and open space uses in the project area. Local planning jurisdictions have maintained open space, recreational, or agricultural zoning designations in the vicinity of these corridors and tend to encourage more intensive uses, such as residential and commercial development, elsewhere.

Review of information from Riverside County, Imperial County, and the Southern California Association of Governments related to planned development projects do not indicate any specific real estate developments or projects that would conflict with the Proposed Project. Furthermore, an ongoing community outreach effort for the Proposed Project has kept local planning departments, elected officials, and the public informed to reduce the potential for unanticipated future land use conflicts.

3.7.2 Environmental Consequences

This section discusses potential land use impacts that could occur as a result of the Proposed Project and alternatives. The first part of the section addresses significance criteria and the impact assessment methodology utilized. The second part of the section identifies specific land use impacts expected to occur and mitigation measures that could be implemented to reduce the severity or significance of those impacts.

3.7.2.1 Significance Criteria and Impact Assessment Methodology

The significance of potential land use impacts were determined based on relevant NEPA and CEQA guidelines. The BLM has defined thresholds that may be used to determine whether a land use impact is significant under NEPA. Similarly, CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations §§ 15000-15387, Appendix G) identify certain thresholds that may be considered to determine whether an impact is significant. Using these thresholds, the Proposed Project would be considered to have significant land use impacts if it were to result in:

- Permanent displacement of existing, developing, or approved urban/industrial buildings or activities over a substantial area (i.e., residential, commercial, industrial, governmental, or institutional);
- Conflicts with an existing right-of-way;
- Conflicts with any applicable land use plan, zoning ordinance, land use policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating environmental effects, including applicable habitat conservation plans or natural community conservation plans; and
- Converts Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance to non-agricultural use.

3.7.2.2 Land Use Impact Issues Common to All Project Alternatives

Existing land uses over the entire project area were identified during site visits and using aerial photography. No existing residences, commercial businesses, or other urban land uses were identified that would be displaced by implementation the Proposed Project or alternatives. In addition, review of the various county and city land use plans, and contacts with local planning departments did not identify any planned developments that would be displaced. As described previously, the Proposed Project and alternatives would be located primarily in designated utility corridors, which are intended for siting utility projects. The project area is also in a generally rural desert setting characterized by expansive undeveloped open space areas. The proposed new substation on Hobsonway would occupy 25 acres of presently vacant land west of the City of Blythe and no displacement of existing urban land uses would be required to utilize that site.

Thus, for any of the project alternatives, impacts related to displacement of existing, developed, or planned urban land uses would not occur.

At various locations in the project area, the Proposed Project and alternative transmission line routes would cross or run adjacent to other existing utilities and linear projects authorized by right-of-way agreements with BLM. To date, no conflicts have been identified with existing rights-of-way within the designated utility corridors or elsewhere. In general, the proposed transmission line would span or avoid existing utilities or facilities utilizing existing or approved rights-of-way in the project area, such as highways, transmission lines, pipelines, canals and aqueducts, and communication lines. Thus, for any of the project alternatives, impacts related to conflicts with existing rights-of-way would not occur. The presence of overhead 500-kV transmission lines has the potential to impact the use of heavy equipment, such as cranes or boom trucks that would be used to maintain or construct modifications to other utility projects crossing underneath the Proposed Project. In general, the Proposed Project is designed to have sufficient clearance to minimize the potential for electric hazards interfering with other land uses and activities. Any impacts to pipelines related to induced voltages would be mitigated by the project.

Implementation of the Proposed Project or alternatives would require the acquisition of appropriate rights-of-way from the respective landowners or land management agencies. On federally-managed public land, a right-of-way grant would be required from the BLM on CDCA land, and from the BOR for rights-of-way across federal land associated with the Coachella Canal. On State-managed public land, a land use lease would be required from the CSLC. On private and tribal land, sufficient rights-of-way would have to be acquired from the property owners to construct, operate, and maintain the transmission facility. The project applicant would negotiate appropriate compensation for any damages resulting from construction, operation, and maintenance of the project.

3.7.2.3 Proposed Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Based on the significance criteria described above and the types of impacts expected to occur as a result of the project, the following is an assessment of land use impacts for the Proposed Project. Where impacts have been identified, mitigation measures that could reduce their severity are also presented.

Land Use Impact 1: *Elements of the Proposed Project may be inconsistent with applicable land use plans, zoning ordinances, or applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan.*

Construction and operation of the new substation/switching station on Hobsonway west of Blythe would not conflict with applicable land use plans, zoning ordinances, or policies established by the City of Blythe. As described in Section 3.7.1, the new substation/switching station site is designated for Heavy Industrial (I-H) use in the City of Blythe General Plan, and is zoned General Industrial (I-G) in the City of Blythe Zoning Code. "Utility operations facilities," such as the Blythe Power Plant and the Proposed Project, are allowed unconditionally in this zone. Therefore, the addition of the new substation/switching station is consistent with the current land use designation and zoning. The new substation/switching station site is near the

Blythe Power Plant and is compatible with other industrial uses in the area. The new substation/switching station would not preclude nearby farming activity nor interfere with agricultural production.

The construction of the new substation on Dillon Road north of Indio would not displace any existing developed land use and would be consistent with the planning guidelines established by Riverside County.

In the Western Coachella Valley, the proposed modification to the Devers Substation would occur on presently vacant land adjacent to the existing substation within BLM Designated Utility Corridor K. No displacement of existing land uses would be required and this modification would be consistent with applicable land use planning guidelines established by Riverside County.

Construction of the Proposed Project transmission line would occur over land owned and administered by several federal, state, tribal, and local agencies. As described previously in Section 3.7.1, the majority of the Proposed Project transmission line route crosses BLM-administered land that is part of the CDCA. The Proposed Project transmission line route would cross areas classified as MUC L and M, both of which permit the installation of new transmission lines, provided they are within designated utility corridors. Since the Proposed Project would be located within BLM Designated Utility Corridor K over its entire length, it would be consistent with BLM's CDCA Plan, and the recently adopted NECO Plan and CVPA.

The Proposed Project transmission line route would cross the Chuckwalla Dune Thicket and Coachella Valley ACECs; the Chuckwalla DWMA, and the Mule, Palen-Ford, and Coachella Valley WHMAs which were designated by BLM due to the presence of habitat for sensitive wildlife species. These areas are managed by BLM using MUC designations L and M, which accommodate new transmission line projects. However, where the proposed transmission line crosses them, unique or additional mitigation measures may be required by BLM to protect the sensitive resources present.

Implementation of the Proposed Project would not result in conflicts or inconsistencies with any identified federal, state, city, or tribal land management policies where the transmission line would cross land owned, regulated, or managed by the BOR, CSLC, the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, or the cities of Blythe, Cathedral City, or Coachella. The Proposed Project transmission line route would be located south of I-10 in the Chuckwalla Valley and would not impact the Colorado River Aqueduct or the proposed water storage project envisioned by MWD near Hayfield.

For Riverside County, the Public Facilities and Services Element of the RCCGP accommodates transmission line projects in the county, provided various objectives and standards are met. Since the Proposed Project would utilize a designated utility corridor, avoid established parks and wilderness areas, be routed adjacent to an existing transmission line to reduce visual impacts, and would not significantly impact raptors or other sensitive species, it would be consistent with the land use planning objectives of Riverside County.

With respect to potential conflicts with airports in Riverside County, the Proposed Project would be consistent with the airport land use plans established for the Desert Center, Chiriaco Summit, and Bermuda Dunes Airports. Transmission line development could potentially be incompatible with the Blythe Airport CLUP. During the permitting process for the project, the Riverside County Airport Land Use Commission would conduct a Development Review for the Proposed Project to assess potential conflicts with these airports and identify any mitigation measures that would be required. If necessary, the Proposed Project will also obtain a Determination of No Hazard to Navigation from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) through preparation of a Notice to Construct.

Since the Proposed Project would be consistent with applicable land use plans and policies of the federal, state, and local governments with jurisdiction over the land in the project area, no significant land use impacts would occur and no mitigation measures are required for Land Use Impact 1.

Land Use Impact 2: *The project would potentially convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, or Farmland of Local Importance (Important Farmland) to non-agricultural use.*

Portions of the Proposed Project transmission line route would cross parcels designated as important farmlands in the vicinity of the proposed new substation near Blythe and in isolated locations the Western Coachella Valley.

For transmission line projects, construction-related disturbance that could impact agricultural land uses on a temporary basis include access roads, wire-pulling sites, staging areas, and support structure assembly areas. The Proposed Project would utilize existing access roads and disturbed or vacant areas to the fullest extent possible and avoid impacts to active agricultural operations. Given the nature of transmission line projects, the only permanent ground disturbance that would be required would be for support structure footprints and substations. As described in Table 2-1, support structure spacing would average 1,400 feet. It is likely the project would span parcels under active cultivation, where feasible.

Unlike other land uses, such as residential and commercial businesses, agricultural operations are compatible with transmission lines and could continue underneath the proposed transmission line where spanned. Since important farmlands in the project area would either be spanned or minimally impacted by support structure footprints, the conversion of important farmland as a result of the Proposed Project would be minimal and insignificant in nature. Two small parcels of Williamson Act designated farmlands would be crossed by the Proposed Project. According to California State law, “the erection, construction, alteration, or maintenance of gas, electric, water, communication, or agricultural laborer housing facilities are hereby determined to be compatible uses within any agricultural (Williamson Act) preserve” (Govt. Code §51238).

In summary, the Proposed Project would result in insignificant impacts on important farmlands present in the project area.

3.7.2.4 Alternative A Impacts and Mitigation Measures

As described in Section 2.0, Alternative A is essentially identical to the Proposed Project, with the exception of the Option A-2 transmission line route which runs from about Desert Center to near the Cactus City Rest Area in the center of the project area. The following is a discussion of

land use impacts and mitigation measures that would be unique to Alternative A in the vicinity of the Option A-2 alignment. Aside from these specific differences, land use impacts would be the same as described previously for the Proposed Project for the rest of the project area.

Land Use Impact A1: *Elements of Option A-2 may be inconsistent with applicable land use plans, zoning ordinances, or applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan.*

The Alternative A Option A-2 transmission line route would pass through the historic Camp Young area on the south side of I-10 to the west of Chiriaco Summit. Although there are no developed recreational facilities or other land uses present that would be directly impacted, dispersed recreational activities could be temporarily displaced during construction. Since the General George S. Patton Memorial Museum is located on the north side of I-10 at Chiriaco Summit, no impacts would occur to the museum due to implementation of Alternative A.

Land Use Impact A2: *Option A-2 could potentially convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, or Farmland of Local Importance (Important Farmland) to non-agricultural use.*

Land use impacts related to important farmland would be the same as those described for the Proposed Project. Accordingly, Alternative A would result in insignificant impacts on important farmlands present in the project area.

3.7.2.5 Alternative B Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Land Use Impact B1: *Elements of Alternative B may be inconsistent with applicable land use plans zoning ordinances, or applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan.*

The Alternative B transmission line route would follow BLM Designated Utility Corridor J over about half of its length. The remainder of the route would parallel SR-78 and the existing UPRR tracks, outside of BLM designated utility corridors, over the rest of its length to the Midway Substation. Option B-1, located to the east of the main Alternative B route, would also be outside of the BLM's Designated Utility Corridor J. The Upgrade Segments of the Alternative B transmission line route would be located in BLM Designated Utility Corridors M and K and, therefore, would be consistent with the objectives of the CDCA and amendments. Since the CDCA Plan calls for the siting of transmission line projects within designated utility corridors, the implementation of Alternative B (including Option B-1) would be inconsistent with the CDCA Plan and the BLM's land use planning objectives for the CDCA, which would represent a significant land use impact. This impact could be mitigated through amendment of the CDCA Plan, as described below.

The Alternative B transmission line route would cross the Chuckwalla DWMA, the Mule and Milpitas WHMAs, and the Coachella Valley ACEC. As discussed previously, these areas were designated by BLM due to the presence of habitat for sensitive wildlife species. These areas are managed by BLM using MUC designations L and M, which accommodate new transmission line projects. However, where the proposed transmission line crosses them, unique or additional mitigation measures may be required by BLM to protect the sensitive resources present.

The Alternative B transmission line route would also pass within close proximity to, but not enter, the Palo Verde Wilderness Area, the North Algodones Dunes Wilderness Area and ACEC, the CMAGR, the Mule Mountains ACEC, and the Singer Geoglyphs ACEC, but would not impact those areas or the resources present.

For Riverside County, the Public Facilities and Services Element of the RCCGP accommodates transmission line projects in the county, provided various objectives and standards are met. Since Alternative B would utilize Designated Utility Corridors J, M, and K specifically within Riverside County, avoid established parks and wilderness areas, has been routed adjacent to an existing transmission line to reduce visual impacts and would not significantly impact raptors or other sensitive species, it would be consistent with the land use planning objectives of Riverside County.

As described in Section 3.7.1, the IGP regulates land use in the county and provides guidance related to transmission line project design and installation. The IGP encourages the use of existing corridors, rights-of-way, and design features that minimize the impacts of transmission lines to the extent practicable. Since Alternative B (and Option B-1) would be outside of designated utility corridors over about half of its length in Imperial County, it would be inconsistent with the IGP and its implementation would result in a significant land use impact on the county. It is possible this impact could be mitigated through obtaining a General Plan Amendment from the county as described below.

The Imperial County Zoning Ordinance also regulates transmission line project design and installation. Within Imperial County, most of the Alternative B transmission line route is within the S-2 (Open Space/Recreation) zone, and a small portion of the route is within the A-3 (Agricultural) zone near the community of Palo Verde. The S-2 zoning designation limits the height of transmission line structures to 100 feet, while the A-3 zoning designation limits their height to 120 feet. Since Alternative B would utilize single pole support structures ranging in height from 100 to 125 feet, the project would be inconsistent with the Imperial County Zoning Ordinance where the height restrictions would be exceeded. It is likely this impact could be mitigated through obtaining a zoning variance from Imperial County as described below. It is also possible that the project design would be modified to utilize poles that would comply with the county height limits by utilizing shorter spacing. Finally, potential project-related conflicts with aviation would be reviewed by the Imperial County Airport Land Use Commission.

Land Use Impact B1 Mitigation: *Amend the CDCA Plan, and obtain a General Plan Exemption and Zoning Variance from Imperial County.*

If Alternative B (with or without Option B-1) was the selected alternative route, an amendment to the CDCA would be required. The CDCA Plan identifies designated utility corridors within the planning area, and the decision criteria used for siting future utility projects or designating new corridors.

In analyzing any applicant's request for amending or changing the Plan, the BLM District Manager, will among other things, determine if alternative locations within the CDCA are available which would meet the applicant's needs without requiring a change in the Plan, determine the environmental affects of granting and/or implementing the applicant's request,

provide opportunities for public comment on the proposed amendment, and evaluate the effect of the proposed amendment on BLM management's desert-wide obligation to achieve and maintain a balance between resource use and resource protection.

Inconsistency with the IGP related to routing the transmission line outside of designated utility corridors could be rectified through obtaining a General Plan Amendment from the county. Similarly, inconsistency with the Imperial County Zoning Ordinance for zones S-2 and A-3 could be rectified through obtaining a zoning variance from Imperial County, which would accommodate transmission line support tower heights greater than allowed under the current zoning ordinance.

Land Use Impact B2: *Alternative B would potentially convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, or Farmland of Local Importance (Important Farmland) to non-agricultural use.*

Important farmlands along the Alternative B transmission line route are located in the Palo Verde Valley, south of the substation site to about the Imperial County line. These lands are designated as Farmland of Local Importance. In addition, a few small parcels of land designated as Farmland of Statewide Importance are found near the Midway Substation. Finally, a few parcels of important farmland are also located along the Alternative B transmission line upgrades in the Coachella Valley.

As described for the Proposed Project, construction of Alternative B would utilize existing access roads and disturbed or vacant areas to the fullest extent possible and avoid impacts to active agricultural operations. It is also likely the project would span parcels under active cultivation, where feasible. Since important farmlands in the project area would either be spanned or minimally impacted by support structure footprints, the conversion of important farmland as a result of the proposed project would be minimal and insignificant in nature.

In summary, Alternative B would result in insignificant impacts on important farmlands present in the project area.

3.7.2.6 Alternative C Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Alternative C would result in impacts similar to those discussed for the Proposed Project because it would utilize a very similar route to the Proposed Project. Like the Proposed Project, Alternative C would be located entirely within BLM Designated Utility Corridor K that generally follows I-10 over its entire length (Figures ES-1 and ES-2).

The following is a discussion of land use impacts and mitigation measures that would be unique to Alternative C. Aside from these specific differences, land use impacts would be the same as described previously for the Proposed Project for the rest of the project area.

Land Use Impact C1: *Elements of Alternative C may be inconsistent with applicable land use plans, zoning ordinances, or applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan.*

Unlike the Proposed Project, the transmission line route that would be utilized for Alternative C would avoid the Chuckwalla Valley Dune Thicket ACEC and the Mule WHMA entirely. No impacts to these areas would occur and mitigation would not be required.

Land Use Impact C2: *Alternative C would potentially convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, or Farmland of Local Importance (Important Farmland) to non-agricultural use.*

Land use impacts related to important farmland would be the same as those described for the Proposed Project. Accordingly, Alternative C would result in insignificant impacts on important farmlands present in the project area.

3.7.2.7 No Project Alternative

Under the No Project Alternative, project-related substation and transmission line facilities would not be constructed and land use impacts discussed under Proposed Project, and Alternatives A, B and C would not occur.